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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001790

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SENATE STAFFDEL'S MEETING WITH MFA U/S MUTRIFF  
SIDDIQ

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1786

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1777

[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 1737

[1](#)D. KHARTOUM 1697

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Classified By: A/CDA Mark Asquino, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The situation in Abyei is under control following intervention by a GNU (NCP/SPLM) delegation to the town on December 13, MFA U/S Mutriff Siddiq told a visiting Senate Foreign Relations Committee Staffdel December 14. However, the regime remains concerned about a possible JEM incursion into Kordofan and has sent six additional SAF battalions to South Kordofan to secure the oil pipeline. Per GOS sources, the JEM column of 300 vehicles that crossed from Chad into North Darfur last week is standing fast in Kariari, North Darfur. JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim reportedly promised UN/AU mediator Djibril Bassole that JEM forces would hold off on any attacks. Regarding the US offer of assistance with an independent ceasefire monitoring team, despite heated debate within the regime on whether the US proposal should be encouraged apart from a UNAMID monitoring mechanism, the prevailing GOS view is that the US offer should be in support of a UNAMID mechanism. Siddiq urged the staffdel to bring back the message to Washington and the next administration that engagement with the GOS is the best way to ensure stability and peace in Sudan. He added that the "scenarios" that have been proposed by interest groups in the US will destabilize Sudan. Siddiq acknowledged that the Sudanese (both the government and the rebels) are waiting to see what will happen with the ICC and what approach the new US administration will take toward Sudan. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Visiting Senate staffdel, A/CDA Asquino, and polchief met with MFA U/S Mutriff Siddiq on December 14 in Khartoum. As an NCP insider with close connections to Vice President Taha and with responsibility for the political, peacekeeping, and management portfolios in the MFA, Siddiq is more than meets the eye. (Note: The staffdel is composed of Shannon Smith, US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Michael Kuiken, US Senate Committee on Armed Services; and Major James Kleagar, US Army Legislative Liaison. The staffdel will be in Sudan from December 12 to 20, and will also travel to Darfur and southern Sudan. End note.)

[1](#)3. (C) A/CDA Asquino introduced the staffdel and raised the issues of recent fighting in Abyei (Ref A), the JEM incursion from Chad into North Darfur, and the GOS-proposed ceasefire in Darfur. Siddiq claimed that the situation in Abyei is

"under control" and that the shooting in the marketplace on December 12 was an "isolated incident." Siddiq insisted that there was nothing "orchestrated" in Abyei, and said he was troubled by FM Deng Alor's claim that elements in the SAF sympathetic to JEM may have instigated the shooting incident to draw SAF troops into Kordofan to prevent them from defending Khartoum or other targets (Ref B). (Note: Alor apparently also shared this information privately with Siddiq and it was not clear from our meeting with Siddiq whether Alor told him that he had also shared his views with CDA Fernandez. End note.) Siddiq said he did not give any validity to these claims. However, Siddiq did acknowledge that the GOS is concerned with securing oil installations and the oil pipeline, and therefore the SAF has sent six additional battalions to South Kordofan in order to secure these installations. Siddiq described the group of JEM vehicles that had crossed from Chad into Darfur as "very huge - at least 300 vehicles" and said it had been confirmed by Sudanese national intelligence (NISS). He said JEM has two military objectives: first to expand control in Darfur, and second to strike at oil fields and oil installations. Siddiq said he met with UN/AU Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole on December 13, and Bassole told him that JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim had promised to stand fast on the border in North Darfur and not to mount any attacks at this time. For now the vehicles are assembled in the vicinity of Kariari in North Darfur, according to Siddiq, who made it clear he did not put much faith in Ibrahim's promise to Bassole.

14. (C) Siddiq said the GOS is equally preoccupied at the moment with recent tribal fighting in South Darfur, which resulted in the deaths of at least 100 (according to UNAMID) members of the Salamat (Arab) and Habbaniya (African) tribes. He said that dozens of people were also killed when members of the Salamat tribe attacked the Beni Halba tribe (both Arab

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tribes). Most of the fighting has resulted from disputes over cattle and grazing rights and often happens at this time of year during the pastoral migratory season; violence could erupt again at any time over the theft of a single additional cow. Siddiq said the GNU had sent representatives to help mediate these disputes "but the situation is very tense."

15. (C) Siddiq thanked the US for its offer of assistance with a Darfur ceasefire monitoring mechanism, but indicated that the current GOS position is that UNAMID should have the lead on a monitoring mechanism and the US offer should support UNAMID. Siddiq said there was "heated debate amongst ourselves - we are divided on this question" of whether the US should be allowed to implement an independent monitoring mechanism. Siddiq noted that many in the regime point to the success the US and other western countries had in monitoring the ceasefire in the Nuba mountains and other areas of the South during the CPA process, and have argued that this model should also be used in Darfur while UNAMID continues to struggle to get its feet. Nonetheless, the consensus view within the regime that has emerged is that the US offer should be in support of a UNAMID-led ceasefire monitoring mechanism.

16. (C) Siddiq was pessimistic about the current state of the peace process, noting that he had warned Bassole "that it would not be easy." "JEM still thinks it can achieve a military victory and has a political agenda. Abdelwahid has a personal problem - he puts forward conditions without realizing that his conditions are actually the items for discussion and negotiation." Siddiq said he had also warned Bassole that although JEM wants to appear as if it is the most flexible on negotiations, JEM is actually just playing politics with the international community. Siddiq noted that JEM was the most intransigent rebel group at the negotiations in Abuja.

17. (C) Asked by the staffdel what message he would like them to take back to Washington, Siddiq urged that the next US

administration be encouraged to engage with the Sudanese government in order to ensure stability and continued progress toward peace. He expressed confidence that there will be continued progress toward CPA implementation over the next year with elections in late 2009 or early 2010. Siddiq accused "pressure groups in the US" of failing to be even-handed in their views on Sudan, and expressed concern that the "scenarios" they have advocated for Darfur would destabilize the country and prevent progress toward peace. Siddiq acknowledged that all Sudanese, including the government and the rebels, are waiting to see what will happen with the ICC and what policy the new US administration will take toward Sudan. "Conflicting signals from the international community are confusing the rebels. If the President is indicted the rebels will feel they are justified in making additional attacks," and they are also watching closely for signals from Washington." Somewhat ominously but without coming across as strident, Siddiq claimed that if President Bashir is indicted "this will be the end of the process" (apparently referring to the Darfur peace process.)

18. (C) Comment: Given the initially positive reaction of the GOS to the US proposal of a ceasefire monitoring mechanism (Ref D), and recent UNAMID expressions of concern at the US role (Ref C), it appears that JSR Adada may have convinced the GOS that UNAMID should be supported in having the lead role from the outset. Per guidance from Washington, post will clarify with UNAMID and regime officials that the US is ready to play a supporting role. Siddiq is correct that both the government and the rebels are currently in a "wait and see" mode pending the results of the ICC, as well as signs of what direction US policy will take under the next administration. This may make the rebels less likely to allow any progress toward a peace deal now. This, in turn, could make it all the more hard for the government to broker a deal as soon as possible to show signs of additional progress toward peace in Darfur -- in hopes of heading off an ICC indictment and convincing the incoming US administration that further engagement with the Sudanese regime is the best course.  
ASQUINO